DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 224 773 SP 021 315

AUTHOR Beauchamp, Larry; Borys, Andrea
TITLE A Strategy for Uncovering Teacher Professional Development Needs.
PUB DATE [80]
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cooperative Planning; Decision Making; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; *Group Dynamics; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Needs Assessment; *Physical Education Teachers; Professional Development; Teacher Improvement; *Teacher Participation; *Teacher Workshops
IDENTIFIERS Canada

ABSTRACT

A process for identifying professional development needs and planning teacher inservice programs involved the participation of 4 university professors, 4 local administrators, and 20 physical education teachers in 2 workshops. Each of the four groups was asked to "brainstorm" (for 20 minutes) the question, "What do you see as the strengths/concerns of current professional development activities in physical education?" and group leaders recorded remarks. Each participant then rated the listed strengths and concerns on a scale of "strongly agree," "moderately agree," or "slight or no agreement," and reactions were recorded. Workshop organizers categorized reactions into clusters of similar statements (goals, communication, administration, resources, etc.), which then were listed on a transparency showing exactly what the participants had said. Interpretations by the organizers were confirmed and clarified by the group. A second workshop meeting focused on concerns identified by the group, and participants again divided into four small groups, ranked the concerns, and "brainstormed" to identify possible actions and agencies that could help alleviate these concerns. Results were presented at a final session and additions, deletions, and revisions were made based on the group reactions. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED224773

A STRATEGY FOR UNCOVERING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON AUTHORS

Larry Beauchamp B.A., M.A., Ed.D. is an Associate Professor in the Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Andrea Borys B.P.E., M.Sc., Ed.D. is an Associate Professor in the Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Larry Beauchamp

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☑ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

SP 021 315

A STRATEGY FOR UNCOVERING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

Introduction

The Edmonton Public School System employs approximately 200 physical education teachers in its 64 secondary schools. These physical education teachers often express the need for professional development opportunities yet seldom avail themselves when the opportunity arises. One can only assume the apparent apathy is because of the nature or timing of the professional development activity. Informal discussions with teachers, however, indicated that the real problems with existing professional development practices were more complex than either nature or timing.

After discussing these professional development concerns with the local Supervisor of Physical Education and the Director of Professional Development, a process for discovering the professional development needs of the system's physical education teachers was developed and implemented.

Laying The Foundation

Informal discussions with teachers led to the conclusion that the term professional development suffered from a lack of definition. Furthermore, examples of professional development activities offered by teachers tended to be narrow in scope. For our purposes professional development was defined as any activity contributing to a sharing of ideas among teachers or improving the professional or personal knowledge and skills of teachers (Alberta Teachers' Association, 1980).

During these informal discussions the need for teacher autonomy in the area of professional development surfaced. Teachers felt they were capable of defining their professional needs and determining actions to meet those needs. This was expected as planning by participants is one of the main thrusts of current thought in staff development and adult-education (Hall & Loucks, 1978; Knowles, 1970; Wayne County, 1974).

If change is to occur needs must be identified and solutions offered and implemented. The emerging process for identifying teacher needs was based on the premise that no matter what these professional development needs, suggested solutions, and actions are, they must be "owned" by the teachers. Ownership by teachers can be accomplished if they define their needs, and determine potential solutions and ways for implementing them.

The Process*

Four university professors from two faculties, four local administrators, and 20 teachers representing a mix of men and women from both junior and senior high schools were invited to attend an evening professional development workshop. The participants were placed in four prearranged buzz groups and seated in semi-circles facing different walls covered with large sheets of blank paper. These large blank paper sheets served as an "invitation for the teachers to create."

---

* Special thanks is offered to Dr. Ted Aoki, Chairman, Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta for his ideas and assistance in helping us develop and refine this process and to the Edmonton Public School System for allowing us to try it.

A neutral person (a graduate student in this instance) was assigned to each group as group leader and recorder. The definition of professional development as mentioned earlier in this paper was presented to each group. Each group was then asked to "brainstorm" the question, "What do you see as the strengths/concerns of current professional development activities in physical education?" It should be noted that the organizers emphasized that participants focus on both strengths and concerns to prevent the "brainstorming" from degenerating into a complaint session characterized by negativism.

During the brainstorming session the group leaders play an important role. They must be informal, enthusiastic, and know how to involve each member of the group. They encourage the flow of ideas by listening to the reticent participants and by restricting individual comments to clarification only. No judgemental comments or debate are allowed at this time. The group leader stresses co-action and works toward shifting the group focus from a collection of "I's" to a "we" stance.

Inasmuch as the "brainstorming" session was intentionally limited to twenty minutes, a total of 131 strengths and concerns (37.4% were strengths) were generated. This brief time allotment kept the "brainstorming" moving at a quick pace, reduced judgemental debate, and prevented participants digressing from the task at hand.

When the "brainstorming" concluded, the "wings" that the been folded under the paper sheets containing the newly listed strengths and concerns were unfolded. Each participant was provided with a marking pen and directed to visit each of the group lists in the room and rate each strength and concern as a 3 (strongly agree), 2 (moderately agree) or 1

(slight or no agreement). This procedure forced all participants to view each group's display of ideas resulting in an increased awareness of group feelings and thoughts and sensitized individuals as to how the group felt about their specific contribution.

The next step taken in the process involved asking the participants to record verbatim the strengths and concerns on the index cards provided. To facilitate this step, each strength was recorded on a blue card and each concern on a white card.

While the participants retired to a dinner, the workshop organizers categorized the strengths and concerns written on the cards. As a result clusters of like statements (goals, communication, administration, resources, etc.) were generated. Each cluster, as illustrated in Table 1, was placed on a transparency showing exactly that the participants said and how it was interpreted by the organizers.

Table 1

Summary and Interpretation of Panelists' Views

You, the panelists, said:
1. No systematic use of a model or innovative programs.
2. Lack of instructional manuals for teachers in the system.
3. No resource center from which to disseminate materials, teaching methodologies.
4. Lack of an information resource center.
5. Resource center with units, film, etc.

We interpret you as saying:

There is a need for a resource area or program which collects a wide range of instructional materials (e.g.: units, films, lists of resource people, etc.)

Following dinner the clarification process began. Each transparency was presented to the group as a whole and participants were asked to confirm the interpretive statements. It should be noted that throughout the evening special attention was given to minority ideas because often these are the ones leading to changes. No attempt was made to move the group toward total group consensus even though this often occurred. All revisions in the interpretations were made publicly (on the transparencies) resulting in a feeling of "our interpretation." Following the clarification process the 83 concerns and 48 strengths generated by the "brainstorming" session were reduced to a total of 24 and 17 interpretive statements respectively.

When all interpretations were presented and clarified the meeting adjourned. A summary statement of the strengths and concerns as interpreted by the group (exactly as worded on the transparencies) was circulated to each participant. Participants were encouraged to make suggestions for inclusions, deletions, and/or alternations and to bring them to the attention of the group at the follow-up meeting.

A second meeting focused on the 24 interpretations of the concerns identified at the earlier meeting. This time the question addressed was:

> "What are some possible actions and agencies that could help alleviate identified concerns of current continuing professional development activities in physical education?"

The following steps were followed to answer the above question:

1. The organizers divided the twenty-four concerns clarified at an earlier meeting evenly among four buzz groups.

2. The participants were organized into four prearranged groups.

3. Each group ranked the assigned concerns in order of importance and "brainstormed" to identify possible actions and agencies that could help alleviate these concerns.

4. Following small group discussion, a plenary session was organized and each of the four groups presented its findings.

5. Additions, deletions, and revisions were made based on the group reaction.

For example, a concern previously displayed in Table 1 emerged as follows:

Concern: *There is a need for a resource area or programme which collects a wide range of instructional materials (e.g., units, films, list of resource people, etc.)*

Suggested Actions	Agent
1. A resource center that meets the following criteria should be established: a) It should be centrally located and easily accessible (e.g., open Saturdays and after as well as during regular school hours). b) It should have enough "copies" to meet peak demands. c) It should contain a physical education teaching station (an old school?) suitable for in-services and demonstration lessons. d) It should contain an idea exchange for unique techniques and programs from many teachers. e) In addition to units, films and other teaching materials it should provide information on resource people, display ideas, new equipment, and modified and/or invented equipment.	Edmonton Public School Board & Physical Education Supervisor

Each of the 24 concerns was handled in this manner resulting in a thorough, pertinent, and powerful document.

Summary

The process for determining teacher professional development needs was successful in three ways. First, a feeling of openness, trust, and commitment among the participants emerged as the group moved through the process. This openness and trust resulted in the exposure of festering professional development concerns in a variety of areas -- communication, resources, curriculum development, program evaluation, teacher apathy, work load, second teaching areas, sabbatical policies, consultants, administrative procedures, and professional organizations. Second, this process insured that all suggestions were owned by the participants and viewed as "our" recommendations. Third, a document was printed which identified the concerns and actions that could be taken by specific agencies. The resulting document serves as an excellent basis for formulating a comprehensive and long range plan for professional development in the Edmonton School System.

References:

Alberta Teachers' Association. "In-service Education: A Guide to Effective Practice." Professional Development Bulletin, Edmonton, Alberta: Alberta Teachers' Association, March 5, 1980.

Hall, Gene E. and Susan Loucks. "Teacher Concerns as a Basis for Facilitating and Personalizing Staff Development." Teachers College Record, 80(1): 36-53, September 1978.

Knowles, Malcolm S. The Modern Practice of Adult Education: Andragogy vs. Pedagogy. New York: New York Association Press, 1970.

Wayne County Intermediate School District. "In-service Education." Staff position paper. Detroit: Wayne County Intermediate School District, 1974.